Identities Classified: Indigenous Knowledge Management Systems and Gender in the "Age of Information"

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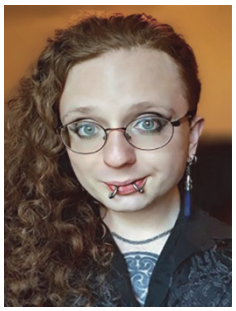

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Diana E. Marsh is an Assistant Professor of Archives and Digital Curation at the University of Maryland's College of Information (iSchool) and Past Chair of the Native American Archives Section of the Society of American Archivists. Her current research focuses on improving discovery and access to colonially-held archives for Native American and Indigenous communities. In 2022, she received an IMLS early career award to pursue those efforts by testing SNAC as a platform for Indigenous representation and discovery. As part of that work, she leads an Indigenous Description Group within SNAC's Editorial Standards Working Group to develop new culturo-technical approaches to Indigenous ethnonyms, languages, placenames, and many other categories of description. In a parallel project, she is working on datasets created by the Council for the Preservation of Anthropological Records to link anthropologists' records with the communities they worked with via Wikipedia, Wikidata, and SNAC.

Travis L. Wagner is an assistant professor in the School of Information Sciences at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. Wagner's research interests include critical information studies, queer archives, and LGBTQIA+ advocacy in sociotechnical systems. Their work investigates how LGBTQIA+ communities create identity in opposition to sociotechnical systems that characterize and limit those identities. Multiple projects within the classroom and with community organizations have led to Wagner exploring and publishing the unique relationships between obsolete archival mediums and queer counter-historical work across archival contexts. Their recent publications include articles in the Journal of Documentation, Critical Departures in Qualitative Inquiry, and Artifact & Apparatus.

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Abstract: This paper explores the intersections of Indigenous knowledge management systems and gender in knowledge organization, reflecting on their potential to shape, challenge, and enrich our understanding of identity. We begin by reviewing the ways that Indigenous Knowledge

Organization (IKO), knowledge management systems, and queer archival theory are converging in information spaces, before presenting two case studies of knowledge organization that highlight intersectional problems and tensions inherent in attempting to represent complex identities in archival and knowledge management systems. We discuss how two-spirit identities are challenging traditional categories of gender identity in traditional naming conventions. Second, we examine the complexity of Native American boarding schools, the inherent hierarchical structures in knowledge management systems, and the relational systems that can be used to create more inclusive and responsive knowledge structures. We explore how archival knowledge management systems can be made more relational, using the examples within the digital tool Social Networks and Archival Context (SNAC), and the challenges of relying solely on written structures to verify embodied knowledge and gender identity. We consider practical interventions to modify knowledge systems into being more adaptable, and the tension between deconstructing and building upon existing knowledge structures, using queering metadata as an example.

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1.0 Introduction

This paper responds to the symbolic annihilation that marginalized communities have experienced within Information Systems, where their identities are absent or misrepresented in archival collections and descriptive tools (Caswell et al. 2016). We explore the intersections of Indigenous knowledge management systems and gender-critical queer theory around information institutions, namely archival systems, examining the potential of each to not only promote equitable practices in information systems but to shape, challenge, and enrich our understanding of embodied identities in the digital age. Indigenous knowledge management systems refer to the frameworks and practices through which Indigenous communities organize and transmit their knowledge. Our paper delves into Indigenous Knowledge Organization (IKO) and explores how decolonizing frameworks and methodologies are transforming the field of archives and the information systems in which they operate. In doing so, we evaluate approaches that aim to challenge and dismantle colonial structures, biases, and power dynamics within archival systems. By drawing on Indigenizing and queering theories surrounding knowledge management systems, the paper explores how archives and their associated information systems, including catalogs, finding aids, and aggregating systems, can be reimagined. Through two case studies, we first discuss how two-spirit identities are challenging traditional categories of gender identity in traditional naming conventions, and second, examine the complexity of Native American boarding schools and the inherent hierarchical structures in knowledge management systems.

We come to these two case studies from particular positionalities. Diana Marsh is a white settler scholar who came to Indigenizing archival work and reclamation after working in large colonial institutions. She is an appointed member of the Society of American Archivists' Archival Repatriation Committee and has served as Chair of the Native American Archives Section, which promotes the Protocols for Native American Archival Materials (PNAAM), developed by the First Archivists Circle in 2007. She is currently the PI on a three-year IMLS grant to 'Indigenize' the SNAC (Social Networks and Archival Contexts) platform, which aims to create a single search platform for aggregated archival discovery. She and Ia Bull founded the Indigenous Description Group in Spring 2023, comprised of Indigenous and ally members, which sits within SNAC's Editorial Standards Working Group, and attempts to set new standards and practices for Indigenous knowledge organization in the SNAC platform. Ia Bull is a member of ᏆᎶᏁ ᎤᏁᏓᏢᎢ ᎩᏕᏩᎩ ᏂᏕᏁᏅ Squirrel Ridge Giduwa Ceremonial Grounds in the Cherokee Nation, and identifies as queer. They are a PhD student at the University of Maryland, studying under Dr. Diana Marsh and is the lead Graduate Assistant for the IndigenizeSNAC project, first being exposed to this work as a participant in the 2021 Indigenous Edit-a-thon. Ia comes to the archival profession from a background in Cherokee and Natchez reclamation work, such as the Natchez Indigital community heritage project using the Mukurtu Content Management System (CMS) and Indian Child Welfare Culture Camps. Travis Wagner is a white, genderqueer settler scholar whose work explores the complex intersections of queer embodiment and information organization with an explicit emphasis placed on centering and affirming community-led identity description practices. Wagner previously worked with both Marsh and Bull on the Indigenizing SNAC project, helping to construct descriptive practices and SNAC Trainings. Wagner also works with queer metadata initiatives and is a co-founder of a regional LGBTQIA+ community archive (Wagner and Whitfield 2019).

Through our collective work (articulated via these two case studies) we investigate potential spaces for Indigenous knowledge management systems, Indigenizing methodologies, and queer theory to reshape archival practices, foster more inclusive representations of marginalized communities, and enable the preservation and dissemination of IKO. By critically examining the intersections of gender, identity,

and information organization, this paper contributes to a broader understanding of the role of Indigenous knowledge management systems in promoting equity, decolonization, and cultural resilience in the digital era. We conclude by imagining how relational systems might be used to create more inclusive and responsive knowledge structures.

2.0 Indigenous Knowledge Organization (IKO)

While some scholarship has begun to explore Indigenous and queer epistemologies and methods within information systems (Wagner, Marsh, and Curliss 2023), these intersectionalities are underexplored in the current discourse. Centering Indigenous and queer identities in these systems requires attention to their layered- and nested-ness, both within identity communities themselves and within the societal, organization, and informational contexts that try to represent them. Moreover, identity representation is necessarily delimited by the contexts, systems, and standards in which information is created, stewarded, and represented. We argue that this necessitates the formation of processes that interrogate these roles within the contexts of specific information systems.

The multitudinous Library, Archive, and Museum (LAM) fields continue to reckon with and reorient institutional and professional perspectives towards Indigenizing and reparative practices. These practices include, but are not limited to, reparative description practices (e.g. Buchanan et al. 2020), repatriation (*Archival Repatriation Committee*, *Society of American Archivists*, n.d.; Fforde et al. 2015), rematriation (Gray 2022), and national or international endorsements of protocols (e.g. the Protocols for Native American Archival Materials, or PNAAM) or policies (e.g. the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, or UNDRIP).[1] The Indigenous "right to know" (Deloria 1978; O'Neal 2015), or in other words, to know of and control or steward their cultural heritage, has become widely accepted as ethical practice across information and archival fields.

Recent scholarship in Indigenous information studies, research methods, higher education, and a wide range of fields has likewise applied 'Indigenous ways of knowing' to a host of traditionally Western- and Euro-centric disciplines. Importantly, such Indigenous knowledges, methodologies, and epistemologies are framed in the plural, against the singular, universalist paradigm. For instance, Margaret Kovach (2021) (Pasqua First Nation) defines Indigenous knowledges as "both the shared commonalities and the diversity of many Indigenous ways of knowing," (19) and has "chosen to use the term Indigenous methodologies, in the plural, to describe the theory and method of conducting research that flows from an Indigenous conceptual framework" (20). Indigenous epistemologies are likewise framed as multifaceted. "Indigenous epistemologies... include an ethical and spiritual base associated with relationships between people, nature, and the cosmos" (67) and "are not human centric, meaning that all species, not solely the human species, are a source of knowledge" (68-69).

Indigenous data sovereignty work has applied Indigenous ways of knowing with the under-acknowledged political premise that Indigenous and Tribal Nations are sovereign entities, and therefore all data, information, technologies, and other systems built to represent their knowledge should be based within "the inherent and inalienable rights and interests of indigenous peoples relating to the collection, ownership and application of data about their people, lifeways and territories" (Kukutai and Taylor 2016, 2; Walter and Suina 2019; Tsosie 2019). The 'CARE' Principles (Collective benefit, Authority to control, Responsibility, and Ethics) for Indigenous Data Governance have formalized a wide range of work in this area. [2] Indigenous information scholarship has likewise turned its attention to how Indigenous knowledges and epistemologies can be inflected in knowledge organization (Littletree et al. 2020; Duarte and Belarde-Lewis 2015) and the systems created to steward and access it (Littletree and Metoyer 2015; Christen 2015).

Littletree's model in particular has been central in reframing an Indigenized conception of knowledge organization, or IKO. Littletree and co-authors (2020) suggest relationality as a central concept to frame a new model for IKO that imbues it at every level with Indigenous philosophies and ontologies. In the model, *Peoplehood*–modes of belonging, and ways of living, practicing, and being in community life – *Indigenous Ways of Knowing*– including a wide range of knowledge building and transfer, like listening and storywork – *Expressions of Knowledge* – such as documents, artworks, or songs – and *Institutions*– such as Tribal LAMs or schools – each radiate out "in a cyclical and interlaced structure"(416) from a core build on *Relationality/Holism*. The whole model is in turn cradled by "values of respect, responsibility, and reciprocity" (417). In turn, the authors posit that starting with relationality at the center of such a model (see Figure 1) can "bridge the epistemological schism between Euro-American ways of organizing knowledge and Native ways of knowing" (411).

Of course, intrinsic to these scholarly and practical interventions is the understanding that Indigenous identities and representations are complex, and "community perspectives" are never of a singular, static voice. As Kim Lawson (Heiltsuk Nation) noted in the PNAAM, "We're not looking at an issue paper by paper or record group by record group. It's a whole system of a way of life. Our knowledge systems don't make sense without spirituality. We are asking for respect for a system of knowledge." Or, as Gregory Younging notes in *Elements of Indigenous Style,* all fields should move from the "colonial practice of transmitting 'in-

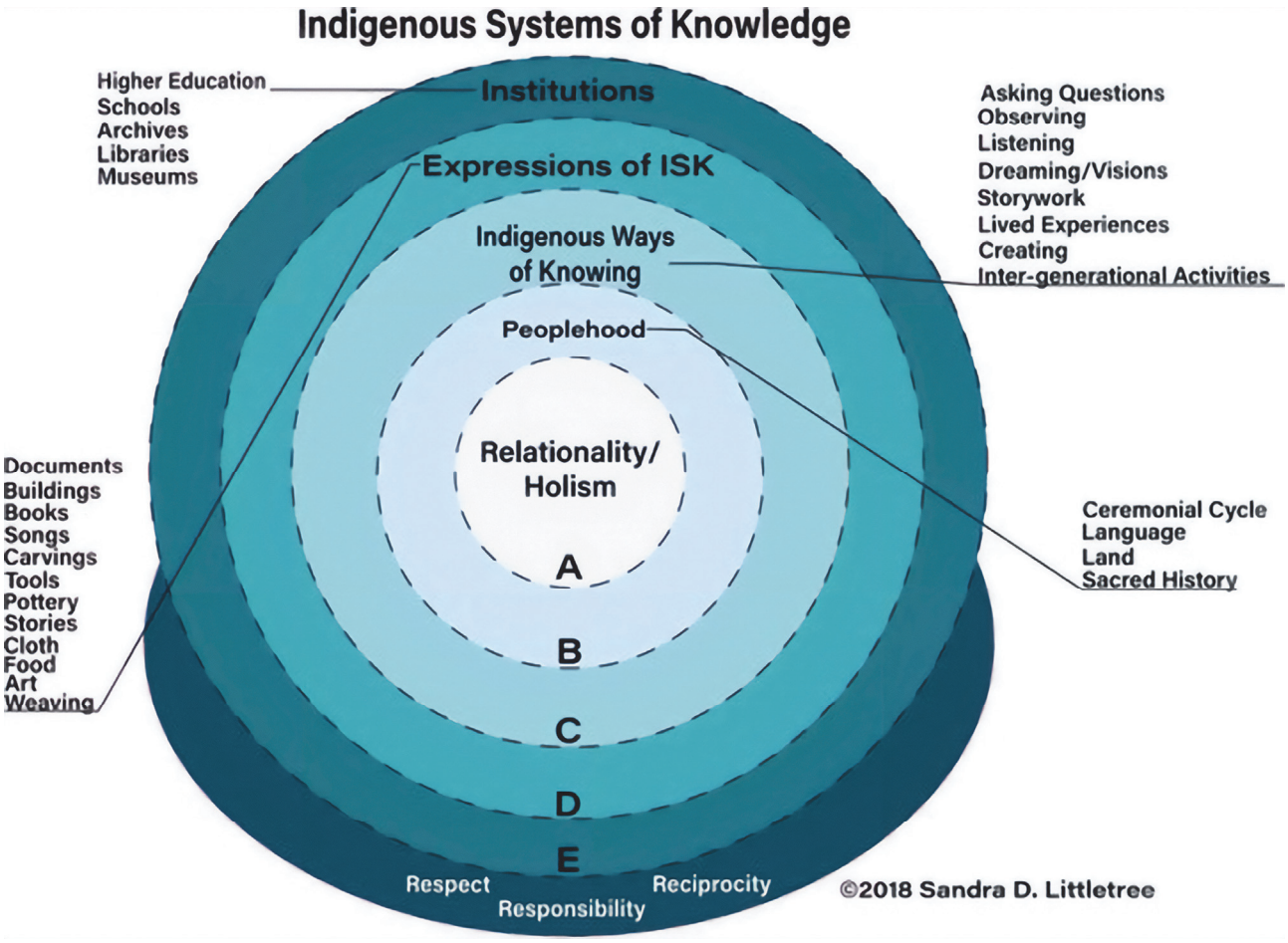

Figure 1. Indigenous Systems of Knowledge Conceptual Model with Examples, Courtesy of Sandra Littletree (2018).

formation' about Indigenous peoples" to "transmitting Indigenous Peoples' perspectives about themselves" (2018, 1) as well as to "reflect Indigenous realities as they are perceived by Indigenous peoples" (6). Littletree et al. (2020), like many other scholars in this space, do acknowledge that they "engage in a form of epistemological code-switching as [they] bridge often incommensurable knowledge systems" (423).

Representing Indigenous identity outside of community spaces thus requires a practice of acknowledging representational sovereignty. And yet, this comes up against precisely these incommensurabilities, first between Western and Indigenous knowledge systems, and second, between multifaceted community identities in flux, and the (necessary) tendency of information systems to standardize, generalize, or stagnate. Anthropology and museum fields have long reckoned with depictions of 'others' suspended in time, and the attendant representational violence of ethnocentrism for Indigenous communities (Simpson 1996; Stocking 1985; Fabian 1983). More recently, those critiques have turned to information systems and catalogues. As information and museology scholar Hannah Turner wrote in *Cataloguing Culture*, "despite decades of postcolonial research and revision, object names and classification terms seem to stick to existing object records, which were situated in the natural historical sciences of the nineteenth century" (2020, 16). Likewise, as early as the late-1970s, historians noted the mis-representation of archival records for Indigenous identity:

> These are the work of white officials in the Indian service, white traders, white settlers, white missionaries, white travelers. Not only are these white men unsympathetic to the Indian viewpoint – if not down-right hostile – they are often lamentably ignorant of what they were observing and trying to describe" (Hagan 1978, 137).

Since the creation and later adoption of PNAAM, more archival scholars and practitioners have recognized the many "injurious perspectives" (First Archivists Circle 2007, 12), embedded in descriptions. Some further advocate for bring-

ing in community-driven perspectives, encouraging "culturally affiliated communities to provide context for the collections from their perspective" (First Archivists Circle 2007, 13). Yet, band-aid approaches in the literature often do not address the underlying ontological and knowledge organizational frameworks that are incommensurate with Indigenous ways of knowing. For instance, there is little discussion of implementing systems that center relationality or holistic-inclusive perspectives within institutional description practices, as advocated by Littletree et al. (2020).

Moreover, Indigenist framing is inclusive of more than the deconstructive elements of critical scholarship in decolonizing methodologies (Rix et al. 2019). As Indigenous standpoint theory asserts, belonging for Indigenous ways of knowing, in all their complexity, within the academy and within the theoretical confines of scholarship, even when they are in conflict with core paradigms of the scientific or professional disciplines in which work is being situated, such as objectivity, neutrality, and universality (Behrendt 2019, 176). And, while the continued construction of imaginaries (Duarte and Belarde-Lewis 2015) and critical fabulations (Hartman 2008) aim to build and perpetuate narratives toward an inclusive and safe future for those marginalized, their implementations can fall short of those aspirations. In other words, such ideas have become so prominent as to become an uncritical default positioning of scholars without visible interventions in practice, particularly in historically colonial spaces. Archives as a place meets 'the archive' of the archival turn (Caswell 2016) in Hartman's critical fabulation, a method for archival use that attempts to bring the suppressed or ignored voices of the past into the public discourse by means of hard research and scattered facts, culminating into creative semi-nonfiction (2014).

Critical fabulations are necessary to find belonging in the time and space that are currently being occupied; critical fabulation was, and still is, important in the ongoing work towards equity in both the archive of public ethos and in archival practice and use. As often happens with influential and timely theoretical interventions, the wide reception of Hartman's methodology has pushed her work into a place where it seems to promise too much, though the dream that a community inheriting trauma may find sense in their present by looking to the blind spots of the past, not only acknowledge the horrors and injustices, but also see resilience, is worth pursuing. However, as Bayley Marquez has recently argued, drawing on Tuck and Yang, while "refusing erasure" can generate "joy, resistance, and rebellion," it may ignore the many ways that minoritized communities were denied refusal, such that "stories of pain" have long been subjected to the academic gaze, or may give too much power to the researcher as '"ventriloquist" or "interpreter" of Indigenous pasts, further promoting archival voyeurism (Marquez 2024, 22). For our work, it may focus too heavily on the pasts' silences, rather than on the state's rapacious bureaucratic recordkeeping, and ethnographer's meticulous 'salvage' documentation (Gruber 1970; Hochman 2014), in which Indigenous lives and knowledge was collected and represented in droves, but violently misrepresented and obscured by information systems (and of course bureaucrats, buildings, and boxes holding it "captive" [Hagan 1978]). In this paper, we therefore acknowledge the centrality of Hartman's framing and the importance of critical fabulations in understanding the relationship between archives and trauma for communities. However, we also hope to bring together with Hartman's work the Indigenous notion of imagining. Imagining is a decolonizing method developed by Melissa Duarte and Miranda Belarde-Lewis (2015), in which Indigenous ontologies are accounted for in the deconstruction of knowledge organization work. As a method, imagining seeks to identify and undermine settler colonial paradigms by refiguring the past, present, and future of Indigenous existence beyond what settler colonialism perceives as paradoxes, temporal or otherwise (Rifkin 2017). This allows for a more creative, futures-oriented approach to unsettling current paradigms.

We take imagining to be the bridge between Hartman's conceptions for archival use and making space for interventions into ontologies of knowledge organization. Specifically, we follow the ongoing work of Black studies scholars who identify critical fabulation as a contra-discursive practice that allows for thriving within anti-Black, white supremacist spaces, such as higher education (Hotchkins 2017), while also making interventions into extant and future representation.

3.0 Queer Archives, Embodied Identity, and Descriptive Paradigms

The archive within queer theoretical framings extends beyond the mere enumeration of queer bodies within historical records towards a more affective reflection of what it means to desire queerness within archival contexts. These framings both share and diverge from Indigenous knowledge paradigms in critical ways; seeking out and embracing queerness in archives results in the contemporary figure also encountering and defining their own queerness. Queer archival theory examines not only the affective nature of encountering "queer pasts" that 'refus[e] to be in the present, but also considers the traumatic nature of recovering those lost figures in moments of stigmatization and institutionalized surveillance (Love 2007, 10-11; Cvetkovich 2003). In response, queer archival scholarship looks for sites of communal relationship-building whether of a historical moment via queer discussion forums (McKinney 2020) or through connecting to the queer figures in analog media from decades earlier (Hilderbrand 2006). Such theorizing

invites contemporary parallels to center communication through the use of technology as integral to understanding the embodied individual and communal queer relationships and how it informs curation and preservation work (Wagner 2024).

Haptic relationships to queer archival objects inform physical, embodied engagements with archives via literal encounters with queer bodies (Wagner 2019). Marika Cifor (2015), for example, explores how the construction of feminine bodies within archival records changes when two divergent yet equally valid forms of femininity emerge within an archive. Specifically, Cifor examines what it means to find a strand of hair of a trans activist within holdings and how it asks archivists to think about their own taken-for-granted assumptions about what bodies do and how they produce identity within archives. For Cifor, describing the activist as a trans woman bears weight, but also raises broader questions about the overwriting of transgender and non-binary gender identities while presuming other cisgender identities to remain unspoken; such descriptions move representation away from archival encounter to policies and practices of description, which under- or misrepresent queer embodiment.

As Melissa Adler (2017) observes, via a reading of Foucault through a knowledge organization lens, the attempts to describe bodies within any institutional knowledge system operate to ensure order and mastery, often at the expense of marking anything deviant from the normative biopolitics of reproduction, and therefore an 'other' (103-104). More directly, the reason that queerness emerges as a particular challenge in archival description is due entirely to historical deployments of archival knowledge organization as a tool to reinforce and revalue state-based political ideologies, ones rooted within broader circuits of capitalism and heteronormative reproduction (Berlant and Warner 1998). The resulting implications for cultural heritage institutions, and for archives specifically, are descriptive and organizational paradigms that either fail to account for queerness or treat it as an additive issue rather than a structural base for knowledge organization. Egregious and historically fraught examples of this misrepresentation occur across descriptive standards ranging from the Dewey Decimal System to Library of Congress Subject Headings and, in turn, impact contemporary acts of datafying demographic information, often at the cost of othering or making invisible queerness (Olson 2013; Christensen 2008; Gofman et al. 2021). Prioritizing queer embodiment thus necessitates confronting both the sites of misrepresentation and, further, how such presumptions emerged.

Prioritizing queer embodiment within such information systems follows work from Bullard et al. (2020) who argue for centring LGBT2QIA+ persons within information systems via context-driven approaches ranging from "simple" name fixes to more "ambitious" participatory modular cataloging work (398). The result of exposing social ideologies present within information organization paradigms allows for more intentional maneuvers to decompartmentalize conflated and over-essentialized identities, while ensuring that intersectional embodiments remain acknowledged. In analyzing transgender archival description, KJ Rawson (2009) observes how institutional standards might expand or limit one's encounters with transgender identity. Rawson notes that institutional collections prioritize descriptive discovery leading to flattened categories for gender identities (i.e., gender minorities).

In contrast, grassroots archival holdings often emphasize serendipitous discoverability, which affords one a more phenomenological encounter and orientation towards gendered potentialities (Rawson 2009, 136). In queering this binary, Rawson imagines new methods of queer archival logics which prioritize the desires of users and emphasizes users naming and emphasizing their embodied identities as present in archival description, rather than merely hoping for, at best, a facsimile of one's embodied identity. This embodied descriptive encounter echoes the aforementioned work of Cifor (2015), while also preempting what Wagner (2022a) identifies as a "body-oriented" approach to representing gender within cultural heritage institutions. In extending these criticisms and reconfigurations of the descriptive practices of embodied identities, especially gendered identities, scholars continue to push back against the essentialisms latent within the emergence of big data while also challenging the flattening of individuals as data subjects when they exist outside of these normative constraints (i.e., the idea of "other" in data) (Goffman et al. 2021; Watson 2020; Hawkins and Burns 2018).

4.0 Indigeneity and Queerness

This critique is particularly relevant for Indigenous queer people who may be situated within cultural contexts where the disclosure of explicit identities is not needed in order to know that they belong, and may even be incentivized to avoid identification with other queer identities (not to avoid the same stigma faced by these communities but rather to avoid being targeted by these communities) (Morgensen 2010). Furthermore, the reasons for being undisclosed do potentially include cultural, social, and/or political pressures that discourage or prohibit open disclosure of their sexual identities, not dissimilar to the "long history of [the United States of America] refusing to recognize the rights of women, racial minorities, and other disfavored groups" (Yablon-Zug 2017, 800). By highlighting the experiences of queer people of color who navigate multiple layers of identity and intersectionality, Decena (2008) disrupts the notion that visibility is the ultimate marker of queer iden-

tity. Moreover, thinking about the presence of queerness (and Indigenous identities) as imbricated by visibility overlooks the historic and ongoing dangers associated with public evocations of queer identity (Spade 2015).

This critique has significant implications for queer archival theory and knowledge organization. It urges a reevaluation of the archival practices that prioritize the documentation and representation of visible queer identities while neglecting the diverse and nuanced experiences of those who choose or are compelled to remain only tacitly identified. Further, as we will discuss, it reifies an ongoing critique within knowledge organization tools regarding descriptions of gender wherein an overreliance on affirmative statements and written accounts dictate how and when one can label gender identity within the historical record (Wagner 2024). Echoing Bullard et al. (2020) such challenges prompt a reimagining of knowledge organization systems that are inclusive, responsive, and attentive to the complexities of identity, recognizing that queerness is not solely defined by visibility but encompasses a broad spectrum of experiences, desires, and subjectivities.

5.0 Case Studies

The two case studies we now relate emerged during our work in and conversations about the Social Networks and Archival Context (SNAC) platform. We began our work in SNAC to better represent and make discoverable Indigenous archival records, trialing SNAC as a tool. SNAC[3] is a cooperative initiative that works to allow searching across all archival collections in the US and beyond. SNAC uses authority control and the Encoded Archival Context—Corporate bodies, Persons, and Families (EAC-CPF) standard to connect distributed archival records by linking entity nodes to related resources (archival collections) and other data points.

SNAC was specifically designed to map "archival diaspora" (Punzalan 2014) across disparate collecting institutions by connecting them via a 'social-document network.' As of writing this article (May 2023), SNAC has 59 institutional members [4] and has linked over 2 million archival resources in more than 4,000 repositories. SNAC is built on a cooperative model: via open access SNACSchool, a shared governance structure, and a CC0 1.0 Universal (CC0 1.0) Public Domain Dedication license, SNAC is constantly growing new editor communities who, in turn, create and link its records.

SNAC potentially presents an important departure from most archival description. Anyone can, in theory, become a SNAC editor, via free monthly SNACSchools. SNAC is its own authority file. So unlike in standard authority files, it requires no institutional bureaucratic process to create new SNAC records, and those records need not have a specified level of "notoriety" as in many Wiki spaces. In 2020, a team began by working closely with an Indigenous Advisory Board, and piloted SNAC for Indigenous discovery via an Indigenous Edit-a-thon [5] co-organized by Irene Gates, Katherine Satriano, Diana Marsh, and Lydia Curliss, in collaboration with SNAC staff. As part of the event, we created an Editorial Guide to Indigenous Description in SNAC. Organizing, carrying out, and writing documentation for the initial edit-a-thon showed both SNAC's potential for this work and the need for a more expansive effort to rework back-end approaches to SNAC's descriptive standards and guidance.

For instance, the Editorial Guide for Indigenous Entity Description in SNAC asserted, "Biographical histories should respect and center the people and communities represented. It is important to note that every community has different perspectives on what language is sensitive and respectful, so creating blanket rules is not usually possible. For insight, look to community-authored material and to peer reviewers where appropriate."

Building on that work, in 2022, we began the IndigenizeSNAC project. As part of this work, we created an Indigenous Description Group to look more carefully at elements of SNAC's descriptive constraints, including work on controlled vocabularies and a wider array of cultural-technical upgrades, which we hope might include Indigenous thesauri, subjects, placenames, and languages. Through our work, and a small in-person edit-a-thon held in November 2022, we began to grapple with issues of Indigeneity and queerness, and their representations not only in SNAC but across western information spaces.

5.1 Case Study 1: Two-spirit identities challenging traditional categories

Indigenous identities have and continue to challenge traditional settler categories of gender identity with real impacts on research (Walter and Andersen 2013, 7-8, 46-47), including traditional naming conventions (Simpson 2017, 25). In particular, "Two-Spirit" identities have long been an accepted concept in Indigenous communities. The English term, "Two-Spirit" was first used by Myra Laramee (Cree) in 1990 during the Third Annual Inter-tribal Native American, First Nations, Gay and Lesbian American Conference in Winnipeg (Meyercook and Labelle 2004), and has since gained traction. Its English usage derives from the Ojibwe *Niizh manidoowag* (Young 2020), and typically means that a person embodies a masculine and feminine spirit, or "two contrasting human spirits (such as Warrior and Clan Mother)" and/or might entail historically "wearing the clothing and performing work associated with both men and women" (The MN Two-Spirit Society 2018). As basket maker, educator, storyteller, activist, Geo Soctomah Nep-

tune (Passamaquoddy) put it in an interview for *Them* magazine, "Two-Spirit was an attempt at self-determination across linguistic barriers, because the existing language is foreign and imposed violently on the Indigenous peoples of North America, was both offensive and deeply colonial in it's gaze. European colonizers imposed homophobia, rigid binary gender roles, and misogyny, under the guise of civilizing indigenous people through the Christian tradition" (Neptune 2018, 03:41). Two-spirit, Indigiqueer, and Indigenous queer people identify themselves as more than the sum of their parts, and more than the sum of multiple marginalized identities. Indigenous and Native identity is already multitudinous in their manifestations, with Indigeneity simultaneously networks of kinship in relation to one another and the land, citizenship in sovereign Tribal nations, and a participatory practice-oriented cultural lifeway marked by community membership.

Perhaps not surprisingly, current archival practice and knowledge management systems do not allow the flexibility necessary to account for the nuances of Indigenous queer identities in singular isolation, let alone at the site of intersectional embodiment. Most problematically, most archival and library description, and the systems designed to represent it, follows the *RDA: Resource Description and Access* standard. RDA, as its own description reads, "is a package of data elements, guidelines, and instructions for creating library and cultural heritage resource metadata that are well-formed according to international models for user-focussed linked data applications."[6]. Billey et al. (2014) critique of cisgender binarism within RDA's 9.7 gender field, the rule now asserts, "RDA instructs cataloguers to choose from the following list: female, male, unknown. If none of the terms listed is appropriate or sufficiently specific, record an appropriate term or phrase, e.g. intersex" (Library of Congress Network Development and MARC Standards Office, n.d.). Library of Congress' Name Authority Cooperative Program (NACO) allows for only the binary choice. Systems drawing on RDA, NACO, and other standards have imported this colonialist, cisnormative, inappropriate, and inflexible representation into their back-end structures (Billey et al. 2014).

In SNAC, therefore, leadership has made arguments for gender to be excluded from the data entirely. Gender identity in SNAC gender fields is now intentionally left blank, potentially adding to the already ample problem of archival silences (Carter 2006). Additionally, even inclusive shifts within RDA to allow for self-identifying of gender to take precedence in approaches to description, such disclosures presuppose informational objects capable of such communication, thus rendering photographs and silent video a moot point (Wagner 2022b).

While some activists and educators like Geo Neptune are vocal advocates for the use of the term "two-spirit," it is important to highlight that Indigenous queer identities encompass a range of forms that self-identification can take. Joshua Whitehead, another prominent Indigenous queer figure, embraces multiple articulations of identity, including Indigiqueer and two-spirit (Keene and Wilbur 2019). It is crucial to recognize that denying Neptune a gender category while restricting Whitehead to one perpetuates the limitations and rigidity of settler classification systems.

In the case of historical figures, the late We:wa (also spelled We'wha or We-wa), was an esteemed *Łamana* (or lhamana) person of the A:shiwi people (Quam et al. 2021) offers insight into the historical queering of gender identities. The legacies from when We:wa engaged in diplomatic relations with the United States government and the non-Indigenous public more broadly have left the inadequacies of colonial terminology apparent. For instance, in SNAC archival resources there is a collection record of photographs depicting We:wa made with the help of John K. Hillers. We:wa is referred to as "We-Wa" and is accompanied with outdated and inappropriate terminology (*Hillers, John K., 1843-1925 | Archival Resources*, n.d.)[7]. Here, We:wa was identified under harmful gendering that isn't being replicated here, but underscores the importance of endonymic descriptions in KMSs. Records like these in SNAC were largely ingested by bots from repositories of colonial archival collections, which in this case utilized these terminologies in their catalogs and management systems. In turn, they have been reproduced in SNAC, and remain despite the possibilities of more flexible cataloguing. The prioritization of white collectors and photographers in colonial collections is evident in that We:wa lacks a person entity in SNAC at all, with representation relegated to spaces as descriptions of 'resources.' This is even in spite of the large quantity of the literature discussing the life and legacy of the late We:wa, from anthropological research to contemporary art exhibits. This can be further evidenced in the entity record of *Hastiin Tl'a*, or (in SNAC as Klah, Hasteen), whose SNAC entity record lacks any bibliography, indicative of automated ingest. The two entities that *Hastiin Tl'a* is connected to are much more fleshed out entities, that of Mary Cabot Wheelwright and Leland Clifton Wyman. These example serves to show how pervasive the harm of misrepresentation and erasure of Indigenous queered identities within archival contexts can be within the contexts of linked data capabilities.

By queering metadata and knowledge systems, particularly in platforms like SNAC, Indigenous, queer, and intersectional identities can be acknowledged and embodied more accurately. The inclusion of Indigenous describers and community collaborators in the process of describing records is essential for providing contextual understanding and challenging the colonial, cisnormative gaze embedded in traditional cataloging practices. These interventions dis-

rupt the western, binarized assumptions that cisgender identity as the sole possibility within existing systems, allowing for a more respectful and inclusive representation of diverse experiences.

5.2 Case Study 2: Boarding Schools

We now turn to a case oriented around the complexity of Native American boarding schools, examining the inherent hierarchical structures in knowledge management systems, and the relational systems that can be used to create more inclusive and responsive knowledge structures for representing these institutions and their attendees (Smith 2021, 70).

One of the core priorities of the IndigenizeSNAC project and the Indigenous Description Group is to help surface relevant archival collections relating to the U.S. Indian boarding school era. By prioritizing boarding schools as entities in SNAC, we can link existing archival collections relating to each of those schools. However, it has been clear that "While SNAC progresses the possibilities of Indigenous knowledge representation, issues persist" (Wagner, Marsh, and Curliss 2023, 9). In our SNAC work to date the complexities around naming and organizing colonialist histories of boarding schools remain such as site persistent challenges.

In Fall 2022, Travis Wagner worked with Ia Bull to organize an in-person edit-a-thon during Native American Heritage Month, oriented around Indian boarding schools and their descriptions. The work included drawing up a list of 28 boarding schools, 23 with SNAC entries, albeit sparse or needing major revisions, and 5 with no entities. We also included 14 historical figures (person entities) who were related to the schools in some capacity. While many of these individuals were likely not Indigenous, their papers were thought to have had strong connections with one or more schools; these in turn, indicated that their enhancement in SNAC could help connect the repositories with their boarding school materials to interested communities today. In total, we all worked on nineteen boarding school records.

While the SNAC organizers and contributors did their best to utilize Indigenous-centered representations for the boarding schools, most existing authority files or lists for schools contradicted localized, geographic naming practices, or the fluidity of historical and institutional names. Identifying the preferred term for a boarding school name must occur for any networking or data linking to take place. In turn, other names for the school become members clustered under this identified name, hierarchically. As a tenuous and admittedly less-than-ideal best practice, SNAC suggested that participants use terms for boarding schools present within the Bureau of Indian Education's directory.

The idea behind this approach was that it served as a way to contextualize current naming paradigms of boarding schools within the United States, while also providing an ideal set of terms for linking data across archival collections, many of which included ties to other government archival holdings. That model not only invariably accedes to colonialist logics, but created descriptive challenges when the fluidity of boarding school naming methods came up against the presumed fixity of institutional naming practices in the directory.

For example, SNAC worked with linking records associated with the Chinle Boarding School, a boarding school that is part of the Navajo Nation located in Many Farms, Arizona. A quick internet search revealed that the boarding school now goes by the name Many Farms Community School and has been recognized, as such, by the (BIE) since 1965 ("About Us," 2023)[8]. Archival holdings across myriad other collections utilized Chinle Boarding School and hierarchical order suggested this to be the preferred term. However, both the community-preferred and authoritative record changed, meaning that creating a new parent node seemed most appropriate. Yet, distinguishing this shift in terminology from an outdated, non-community preferred term required reconciling authority records that offered conflicting interpretations on what can and should be the preferred term. In anticipation of this issue, or the likely case of a community-preferred name being in complete opposition to the BIE's naming choice, the SNAC team decided to treat each case of boarding school naming as a chance for collaborative editing in the future, adhering indirectly to Ruha Benjamin's (2019) idea of slowing down rather than speeding up technology implementation.

Even moving slowly, carefully, and with attention to ethics, the presence of marginality persists in archives, raising questions about what it means for identities, no matter how incorrectly they may be named and referenced, to emerge and be accessed within colonialist institutions (Agosthino 2019). This practice seeks to use the physical archives to carry historical knowledge within collections to the present, even if there is intergenerational trauma evident in several facets of this work: the portrayal, classification, and treatment of Indigenous knowledge and people is deeply recorded. The irony is of course that communities are actively using these materials to subvert settler colonial power structures, yet their collection, the salvage ethos guiding it, what preceded and what followed, have forced communities to seek aid from materials within settler colonial institutions. The process of reparative work can potentially allow for healing, as is the goal of the National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition (NABSHC), but for the foreseeable future all of this work involves marginality and encountering layers of colonial trauma in the archives. Moreover, working through systems built via colonial paradigms constrains the ability to represent these knowledges and histories in more holistic, relational, and community-driven ways, such that these efforts may appear (or be) performative, rather than truly Indigenizing in nature.

6.0 Towards More Flexible Knowledge Management Systems

Part of the challenge of knowledge management and organization rests on the tensions between broad accessibility (which requires interoperability) and specific usability and representation (which requires community and lived knowledge). While once an insurmountable challenge of information organization systems, the continued expansion of linked data on the semantic web has shown the rapid speed at which some forms of information can become accessible. Though there are undoubtedly benefits to this changing environment, it shines a spotlight on the inconsistencies, and their inequities, present in our knowledge management systems. As a standalone technological intervention, SNAC remains decidedly limited in application. SNAC is built on Records in Context (RiC), the standard for archival description developed by the International Council on Archives Experts Group on Archival Description, which attempts to move from a hierarchical description model (typical in archival description) to one more like RDF triples or graph technologies that rely on nodes (entities) interconnected by arcs (relations), which enable querying relationships and navigating among them. Yet, relying solely on the initial instances in which an information object, entity, or person becomes written into an archival record fails to center and affirm embodied knowledge paradigms whether reflective of the complex intersections of gender and Indigeneity or boarding schools and community-centered terminologies. Equally, assuming that a top-down approach to shifting naming conventions in the standards SNAC draws or is built on will translate to all subsequent iterations of the term proves hopelessly idealistic and runs the risk of adhering to rules that if unquestioned ignored community-based practices. Giving space to question and collaborate on case-by-case solutions might offer tools to address the challenges of naming embodied and communal identities. While such hope is no less idealistic, iterating on challenging sites of knowledge production might help upend an overreliance on traditional institutional records as a site of emphasis and, in doing so, provide more opportunities for prioritizing community voices and needs, while rendering archival description a site of radical participatory possibility (Udoewa 2022; Walter and Andersen 2016).

Drawing on the Indigenous knowledge organization model posited by Littletree and collaborators, then, we see applied interventions being necessary in archival and wider LIS institutions. There, "expressions" of Indigenous knowledge such as documents, songs, photographs, and films are being held within inflexible colonial systems that currently underrepresent, misrepresent, or otherwise confine Indigenous knowledge. However, because it is a model for Indigenizing, rather than a reflection of historical colonial knowledge flows, we may want to disambiguate hegemonic institutions and their documentary products or "expressions," such as in the case of boarding schools. As the authors note, applying an Indigenized model of knowledge organization that centers relationality can perhaps allow Indigenous ontologies to "emerge in otherwise colonial institutions," and yet these knowledge systems remain incommensurable" (Littletree et al. 2020, 423) (Figure 1). We see SNAC as a possible place to trial more appropriate descriptive approaches in a centralized platform that is untethered to holding institutions, which in turn may provide resources that are usable outside the platform itself.

As Wagner (2022a; 2022b) shows, without a careful consideration for the dangers of essentializing queer embodiment, tools aimed at expanding access to information, such as linked data, will only intensify rather than nuance rigid gender identities. While relational models of categorization might help, for example, denote the complex relationships between historical terms like cross-dressing and more contemporary understandings of transgender identity, the uncritical application of these tools will lead to their conflation within databases and archival management systems, which run the risk of reproducing their social conflation as well. Indeed, this challenge reaffirms the call by Wagner, Marsh, and Curliss (2023) to remember that embodiment and representation within cultural heritage spaces remains an explicitly sociotechnical challenge.

Following queer theoretical interventions within knowledge organization with regard to queer, and specifically gendered subjects, requires confronting the inherent ideologies of categorization, such as those laid bare by the scholars referenced above. Like the institutionalized moves to normalize and codify human subjects, information organization systems incentivize the flattening and essentializing of embodied identities into informational objects. Such work makes apparent the ways that the social elements of society exist in a complex, cyclical relationship with technological production. Gender identity and its representation within information organization systems thus reflects a particularly important site for understanding sociotechnical systems (Wagner, Kitzie, and Lookingbill 2023). Following the methodologies of queer theory as applied to knowledge organization responds by asking not merely about who or what gets described around queer embodiments, but instead focuses on how such descriptions came to be, and for what imagined purposes. From a broader stance on cataloging and information description, Emily Drabisnki (2013) calls for a "queering of the catalog" as a means to interrogate the presumed values of providing universalized relationships between embodied identities and categorical values. Drabinski (2008) elsewhere imagines these interrogations as a site with pedagogical potential, allowing for people to have

conversations about the social presumptions rooted in our knowledge organization practices. By queering the presumed values of cataloging as a neutral or purely technological practice, one is able to lay bare not only the inherent ways these systems reproduce inequities, but often fail to account for the normative presumptions inherent within the sociocultural moments of their design (Wagner, Kitzie, and Lookingbill 2023). In response, we argue that archival knowledge management systems should become more relational and flexible.

To this end, we imagine knowledge management systems that are attendant to the complexities of lived experience and embodied knowledge becoming more relational in nature. Relationality here operates twofold. First, through the use of linked data, one can build literal relationships between two ideas or entities, including contradictory, problematic and/or outdated terms. This allows for community-centered knowledge to more easily replace root nodes within knowledge hierarchies, while still retaining the intricate relationships that make complex historical identities accessible across archival contexts. For both the case of boarding schools and two-spirit identities, this allows for descriptive iterations at the site of a record, while also ensuring that community-led knowledge paradigms no longer become additive noise to a preferred, and often-limited institutional naming convention. Second, a relational model for knowledge management systems must also figuratively value relationships. As evidenced by SNAC training, our ability to identify the challenges of boarding school knowledge hierarchies emerged only through the functions of having a space where members of the community and knowledge organization practitioners could meet, while also having the ear of a liaison to the SNAC system itself. The relationship built within this collaborative triptych allows for a context-driven approach to knowledge hierarchies that simultaneously accounts for the programming minutiae of systems design. Implications for the relational approach to knowledge management systems hold heretofore under-examined potentials for not only reparative description to center Indigenous community knowledge, but also offer adaptive, context-driven approaches to other historical, geopolitical, and identity-based knowledge organization challenges worthy of deeper consideration.

SNAC is only one platform and one tool for addressing these disconnects. We hope to leverage the cooperative role of SNAC in reconsidering representation for these boarding schools, in collaboration with communities and community knowledge. We see the potential of using SNAC's newest capacities to undertake that work. SNAC's technical teams have recently developed a plugin for OpenRefine to refine, reconcile, and transform large data sets, including through the extraction of existing web-based linked data. They are also launching a controlled vocabularies module in which editors can design and tailor their own descriptive terminologies and thesauri. Meanwhile, the ongoing work of the National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition (NABSHC) and its National Indian Boarding School Digital Archive (NIBSDA) has led to the development of possible new community-driven data for use in SNAC. Their work offers an important possible partner in leveraging the power of this kind of metadata transformation and aggregation in SNAC, with informational, relational, and descriptive impacts. Meanwhile, RDA launched a Taskforce on Gender Balance[9] which could seek to remedy the binary requirement in the current description. However, that group has not been active since 2018. The Trans Metadata Collective has been working to develop "best practices for the description and classification of trans and gender diverse information resources" which could trickle down to other standards, and in turn to platforms like SNAC (Watson et al. 2023). Additional approaches might consider scaled methods for describing embodiment, such as those deployed at the Out on the Shelves Library[10], which allow for modular genre and subject organization built from multiple sites of queer and intersectional embodiment (Bullard et al. 2020).

In the meantime, our future work includes advocacy and work with the SNAC Technical Standards Working Group and Editorial Standards Working Group to align gender descriptions with community-based and embodied approaches. Adapting knowledge management systems and their platforms to more flexible, community-driven standards and back-end structures might better represent intersectional identities.

7.0 Conclusion

Potawatomi writer and botany scholar Robin Wall Kimmerer has noted, "names are the way we humans build relationships, not only with each other but with the living world" (2013, 208). Information and knowledge management systems likewise seek to build relational representations for a wide range of lived human experiences and knowledge, but the colonial paradigms they are built upon are detached from intersectional and embodied understandings, their knowledge infrastructures often resisting queer (don't use the capital Q, straights!) and Indigenous representation.

This paper explores the intersections of Indigenous knowledge management systems and gender in knowledge organization, reflecting on their potential to shape, challenge, and enrich our understanding of identity in the age of information (Battiste 2002, 90; Cajete 1994, 5). We explored: 1) how two-spirit identities are challenging traditional categories of gender identity in traditional naming conventions and 2) how the complexity of Native American

boarding school naming exposes inherent hierarchical structures in knowledge management systems. In describing two case studies that have sought to unsettle predominant paradigms and highlighted intersectional problems and tensions inherent in attempting to represent complex identities in archival and knowledge management systems. In turn, we suggest that flexible, relational, and collaborative systems might be used to create more inclusive and responsive knowledge structures inclusive of complex identities. Making practical interventions in the spaces of these knowledge systems is often slow (Christen and Anderson 2019), frustratingly so, but we embrace the tension between the drive to dismantle and to build as we pursue transformative work.

Endnotes

1. Gray's "Rematriation: Ts'msyen Law, Rights of Relationality, and Protocols of Return" builds upon the decolonizing literature around repatriation, much of it her own work (2014; 2019), using a decolonial lens to delve into the concept of rematriation. Rematriation, in Indigenous contexts, signifies more than a return or repatriation; it encompasses an Indigenous feminist paradigm, an embodied praxis of recovery and return, and a sociopolitical mode of resurgence and refusal.
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